

This Day in History... June 29, 1995

First US Space Shuttle Docking to Mir

On June 29, 1995, the US Space Shuttle *Atlantis* docked the Russian space station *Mir* for the first time.

The mission, STS-71, was the third in the US/Russian Shuttle-Mir program. It began on June 27, 1995, when *Atlantis* launched from Kennedy Space Center in Florida. This was the 100th US human space launch from Cape Canaveral.

Atlantis reached *Mir* two days later at 9 am on June 29, completing the first docking between a US space shuttle and *Mir*. It was also the first time US and Russian spacecraft linked up in orbit since the Apollo-Soyuz test project 20 years earlier.

When the two craft were linked, they had a total mass of about 225 metric tons. Once linked, the crews met in the *Mir* for a welcoming ceremony. The crews then spent about 100 hours over the next five days conducting a number of operations.



Stamp has a scrambled indicia that can only be seen with a USPS decoder. Hidden are the names of six NASA shuttles, including Atlantis.

There were several objectives to the mission. One was to deliver a relief crew of two cosmonauts to *Mir*. Another was to conduct on-orbit joint US-Russian life sciences investigations. They were also to resupply *Mir* and recover a US astronaut to return home. Among the secondary objectives was filming with an IMAX camera and the Shuttle Amateur Radio Experiment-II (SAREX-II).

The mission included several more firsts. It was the first US Space-Shuttle-Russian Space Station docking and joint on-orbit operations, the largest spacecraft in orbit, and the first on-orbit change of shuttle crew.

On July 4 the crews held a farewell ceremony before undocking. The returning crew of eight people was the largest in shuttle history. They landed back on Earth on July 7.



1995 Russia stamp block includes an image of Atlantis docking with Mir.



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